



**UNITED STATES
ASSOCIATION OF
IMPORTERS OF
TEXTILES AND
APPAREL**

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Honorable William Thomas
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Thomas

The United States Association of Importers of Textiles and Apparel, USA-ITA, strongly supports the Central America and Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) and urges you to approve the draft implementing legislation when it comes before the Ways and Means Committee next week.

CAFTA-DR represents an important opportunity to turn a unilateral program into an improved and reciprocal relationship, to the mutual benefit of businesses and workers in both the U.S. and Central America. It also constitutes an important building block toward full regional integration, encouraging investments throughout this hemisphere to build a competitive network to supply markets in each of the participating countries, while simultaneously supporting economic and political stability.

CAFTA-DR is not a perfect agreement, but we recognize that compromises are a necessary by-product of the negotiation process. For example, we would have preferred to see an agreement that has more business-friendly origin rules, particularly in the apparel sector. On the other hand, there can be no question that apparel manufacturing in Central America has contributed significantly to the improvement of working conditions and labor rights in Central America and the Dominican Republic, through the compliance programs mandated by our member companies. Nothing in the FTA would undermine that and, indeed, the terms of CAFTA-DR and further integration can only expand that success.

We urge you to support a positive recommendation for the implementing legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura E. Jones
Executive Director

USA-ITA members include manufacturers, distributors, retailers, importers and related service providers, such as shipping lines and customs brokers. Member companies account for as much as \$100 billion in U.S. apparel sales annually and source from around the world.